

# The Lament

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THE LAMENT  
OF  
THE SWEATED

BY  
JAMES SAMUELSON,  
*Of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law.*

WITH COVER ILLUSTRATION BY  
G. HALL NEALE.

*"Post Tenebras Lux."*

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THE FOLLOWING PAGES  
ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED  
TO HIS FRIEND

SIR WILLIAM B. BOWRING, BARONET,

ALDERMAN AND EX-LORD MAYOR,  
PRESIDENT OF THE LIVERPOOL BRANCH OF THE  
NATIONAL ANTI-SWEATING LEAGUE,

BY  
THE AUTHOR.





# CONTENTS.

---

CHAP.	PAGE
FOREWORDS . . . . .	xi

I. DIVES . . . . .	I
--------------------	---

The last ball of the season—The ball-room — Royalty — The guests and their dresses—Arrival of Royalty—Two of the costumes—The dances and supper—Luxuries and delicacies of the table—Departure of the guests.

II. SWEATED . . . . .	7
-----------------------	---

A contrast—The worker's garret in Soho —One of the sweated and her surroundings —A visitor—The poor worker's story—"Good-night and God bless you!"—The slums of Liverpool—Their hovels and gin-palaces—The "unemployed"—Barefooted children—Cellar dwellings—Social wreckage—The cellar and its contents—Its denizens—Another sweated worker's tale —Human beings and domestic animals—Dives and Lazarus—A "middle-woman"—Visit to her dwelling and her condition.

III. A FEW WORDS ON THE OTHER SIDE . . . 17

Caution in charity—Excuses for denying help—Casual labour—Worthless husbands and self-sacrificing wives—A delicate subject—Immorality to supplement sweated wages—An example—Harshness of anti-trade union employers.

IV. THE REVELATIONS OF THE "HOME WORK"  
SELECT COMMITTEE . . . . . 22

The anti-sweating agitation — The National Anti-Sweating League—Great meeting at the Queen's Hall, Langham Place—The speakers—Reports of women's protection societies—The Select Committee of the House of Commons on Home Work—Its constitution, *personnel*, aims, and methods of procedure—Bills of Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Henderson, M.P.'s—The Committee's definition of sweating—Author's exception to the statement regarding sweating employers—Volume of the Report—Case of death from starvation—Home Office inquiry—Visit to a sweated "trousers finisher"—Twopence-halfpenny a pair for making trousers—Work required—Materials that the worker finds out of her wages—Visit to the "middle-woman"—Her operations and profits—Wholesale and retail sale prices—Enforced still lower payments to workers—A hint to working

# CONTENTS.

vii

CHAP.

PAGE

men customers—Condition of the workers' dwellings, etc.—Cardboard and match-box making—Conditions under which carried on—Insanitary and sordid occupation—Pay 9*d.* to 15*d.* a gross, worker finding glue paste and string—Case of two sisters, pen-box makers, earning together from 4*s.* 6*d.* to 9*s.* a week—One in receipt of parish relief—A common case—Match-box making, 2½*d.* per gross, comprising 432 parts, *minus* cost of paste, etc.—Filthy surroundings necessitated by trade—Carding industry of Birmingham—Sewing hooks and eyes on cards—Evidence of Mr. Graves—Factory inspector—Middle-woman—Distribution of work—Sweating rates of pay, 6½*d.* to 1*s.* 0½*d.* for filling 144 cards, children of three, four, and five working—Carding of buttons, 2*s.* 6*d.* to 3*s.* for sewing on 14,400 buttons!—Poor relief again, and Dives and Lazarus again—Lace-finishing at Nottingham—Evidence of Miss Squire, factory inspector, and Mr. Askwith, Board of Trade arbitrator—Outdoor work—Profits of middle-women—Workers paid 1*d.* to 2*d.* an hour—Partial combination of employers to raise wages.

## V. PROPOSED REMEDIES FOR SWEATING . . . 42

General character of Select Committee's evidence—Remedies and obstacles to their application—Powerlessness of sweated

workers to form unions—Increasing work in factories—Parallel cases in the past—Help of men's unions—State intervention—Reasons for it assigned by the Select Committee—Reformed State-Unions for sweated labour—Combinations of masters' and men's unions with appeal to Home Secretary—Mr. Henderson's Bill for forming Labour Board—Committee's classification of home-workers—"Wages Board" recommended for certain industries named—Enforcement of minimum wages—Functions of Home Secretary—Constitution of Boards—Chairman—Mode of appointing Boards—Middle-women—Registration of workshops, etc.

VI. CONCLUSION . . . . . 53

Causes of sweating and condition of home workers—Recommendations—Combined work-rooms and crèches (not so-called municipal workshops)—Advantages of such institutions—Less need for middle-women—Greater facilities for registration and inspection—Advantages of Wages Board—Small State aid requisite—Women's suffrage—Their exclusion from Inquiring Committee—Influence of political franchise on wages and conditions of labour—The eloquence of figures—Sweating wages, overcrowding, and starvation—How to help the cause—Conclusion.

# CONTENTS.

ix

PAGE

APPENDIX A. . . . .	59
---------------------	----

A comparative table of union and non-union rates of pay for women's work.

APPENDIX B. . . . .	60
---------------------	----

Mr. Henderson's Bill on Sweated Industries.

APPENDIX C. . . . .	65
---------------------	----

Home labour in Berlin and Germany generally, France, The United States of America, Switzerland, Austria.

Tread! Tread!! Tread!!!  
Her brain is as heavy as lead,  
While she works for a *son* -  
For some Christian or Jew,  
And finds her own needles and thread.

Toil! Toil!! Toil!!!  
Even burning the midnight oil.  
That her children be fed  
On a crust of dry bread,  
Till she's dead, she must sweat and toil.

## FOREWORDS.

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THE object of these introductory sentences is to apologise to the reader for the imperfect character of the treatise, and to plead as its author's justification for its appearance at all, that for more than half-a-century he has taken an active interest in labour movements, more especially in such as had for their object the raising of the wages and improvement in the condition of the working classes. A few words based upon his long experience may therefore be useful at this juncture.

He can well remember when trade unions were regarded as conspiracies in restraint of trade, and when anyone who ventured to justify and support them was considered an enemy of society. The advance from that stage of public opinion to the present, when it is proposed to establish trade unions with legislative sanction and support for the

## 2 THE LAMENT OF THE SWEATED.

gallery in which the band sat concealed by a curtain, and at the other there was a low dais, arranged with crimson-and-gold chairs, two in the centre being surmounted by crowns, for the accommodation of the Prince and Princess of Wales, who were expected along with some other members of the Royal Family.

The scene on the floor of the hall was brilliant beyond description. Many guests were already arrived and were promenading either in the ball-room or in the adjacent corridors. Beauty and wealth combined to give lustre to the scene. Wonderful old lace gowns, exquisite embroideries, and magnificent jewels worn by lovely women and pretty girls, presented a charming picture to delight the eye, whilst the perfume of the many floral decorations ministered agreeably to the olfactory sense. But only a fashionable *modiste* would be able to describe the dresses of the ladies, whilst the variety of uniforms and the flash of jewelled orders worn by diplomatic and military visitors lent additional brilliancy to the scene. The band had been discoursing subdued melodies, when suddenly the arrival of royalty was heralded by a burst



of the National Anthem, whereupon the guests formed rapidly in line to allow the Prince and Princess, accompanied by the host and hostess, to pass up to the daïs.

As we have already said, only a *modiste* could describe all the dresses which were worn on the occasion, and a description of those of the Princess and hostess must here suffice. The Princess wore a remarkably beautiful dress trimmed with exquisitely fine Honiton lace. The under-dress was of white soft satin trimmed all round with the lace, and had above that a fine embroidery in pale pink pearls and gold. Lightly veiling this was an over-dress of white and spotted net, with a bordering band of pale blue satin outlined with gold gauze. The front of the bodice, also of blue satin worked with pale pink pearls and gold, was finished with an embroidered waistband and sleeves and blue rucked chiffon ending in gold tassels, whilst the Honiton lace appeared in a soft drapery over the shoulders. So much for the dress of the leading lady guest. On her head she wore a tiara of diamonds and emeralds, but little else in the shape of jewellery. The

#### 4 THE LAMENT OF THE SWEATED.

attire of the hostess was less elaborate, but still perfect in its suitability. She wore a notable gown of mandarin satin *charmeuse* swathed round the figure and slashed on one side, showing draperies of rich soft satin and silver embroideries. The *decollette* was finished with a very beautiful silver and iridescent embroidery and fringes. With this, superb emerald and diamonds were worn.

The ball opened with a *danse d'honneur* in which the hostess was the Prince's partner, and the host led out the Princess. Other couples followed in order of precedence, which was similarly observed as far as possible when the adjournment took place for supper. That was served in a series of apartments decorated almost as elaborately as the ball-room, and here the whole habitable globe appears to have been laid under contribution to satisfy the varied appetites and tastes of the assembled guests. Fish, game and crustaceans not only from the moors and streams of the three kingdoms, but from the seas, fiords, and woods of Norway, from the French coast and the Canadian prairies; oysters from every part of the world where

they are cultivated ; caviare from Astrachan ; exquisite fruits from tropical and temperate zones, as well as from Covent Garden and from private vineries. Mangoes from India, perfectly preserved ; oranges fresh as though they were just gathered ripe from the trees of the West Indies and elsewhere ; figs from the Mediterranean ; peaches, nectarines, strawberries, every rare fruit whether in or out of season. How they were procured was a mystery even to the guests, many of whom were accustomed to vie with one another in providing similar entertainments ; but "*noblesse*" knows how to oblige, especially when the heir to the throne is a guest. As for the beverages, it is only necessary to say that the wines were furnished from the well stocked cellars of a wealthy British peer, and the various " cups " compounded by the practised hands of an experienced English butler. And all those delicacies and luxuries were bountifully served on tables adorned with lovely flowers, and in well-warmed apartments, whilst snow was falling heavily on the pavement without.

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## 6 THE LAMENT OF THE SWEATED.

The ball and the supper are over, and the guests are being driven back to their homes. Many are happy and delighted with their entertainment ; some are jaded and *blasés*, but all are rejoicing more or less in having basked in the smiles of royalty, and participated in the indulgence of every conceivable luxury that taste and refinement could suggest, and that could be provided by unlimited resources.

## CHAPTER II.

### SWEATED.

IN a small room on the top floor of a wretched tenement in a dingy street in Soho, at no very great distance, therefore, from the mansion we have just visited, and whilst the votaries of pleasure are still in the height of their enjoyment, sits, or rather reclines, a poor half-clad woman before a sewing machine. We say "reclines," for her head is resting against the wall, while she is having a momentary respite from her labours. She is one of the "sweated" about whom we hear so much, and propose to say a few words.

But first we must describe the apartment and its contents. It is about twelve feet square, lighted during the day by a window on which the dust has accumulated so as to exclude much of the light. The furniture consists of a small table, a couple of rickety chairs, a narrow couch or truckle bed, and

## 8 THE LAMENT OF THE SWEATED.

the sewing machine, besides a mattress spread on the floor close to the bedstead. On the table there is a teapot, a cup and saucer, and two or three cracked plates. The dying embers of a small fire burn in the hearth, and on an improvised shelf near the sewing machine stands an evil-smelling paraffin lamp. The atmosphere of the apartment is fetid, and is certainly not calculated to prolong the life of the inmates. Those consist of the "sweated" one and her two children, who are asleep together on the truckle-bed; the mother usually sleeps on the mattress on the floor.

She might be a woman of any age between thirty and fifty, her hair is grey, her pale face still bears traces of youth and beauty, but her sunken eyes, hollow cheeks, and the sinews of her neck denote premature old age, and her arms and hands might be those of a skin-covered skeleton.

Whilst the poor creature reclines half asleep, a lady taps gently at the door, and, receiving no response, she enters the room quietly and looks about her. She appears to be either a lady inspector holding some

post in the sanitary service, or one of those emissaries of the philanthropically-disposed sent to inquire into the condition of poor workwomen. This is, however, immaterial, for it is concerning the last-named that we desire information. This the reader shall have in the poor woman's own words. The entrance of her visitor rouses her from her stupor, and at first she finds it difficult to answer her inquiries coherently.

"You seem very tired, my good woman; this is a late hour for you to be at work."

"Yes, ma'am; I want to get this job finished before to-morrow." (It is Saturday night.) "Then I shall have a day's rest."

"Then you don't work on Sundays?"

"Yes, if I can't get a job finished by the week's end, and the things are wanted."

"What kind of work do you do?"

"I generally work for ———. I make their cheap shirts—'run ups' they call them. They are made of this striped cotton" (pointing to a half-finished shirt she is making). "I get them just as they come from the cutter, and run them up. I put collars and cuffs on them and hem the

bottoms. The button-holes are made and buttons are sewn on at the factory. I get about ninepence a dozen, more or less, for making them, and make three dozen in a day. When I am in full work I can earn from eight to ten shillings a week after paying expenses ; that is, if I keep at it, but I have the children to look after. . . . Oh, yes, I often work as late as this. I pay three and sixpence a week for this room. I have to find my own sewing cotton. It costs me fourpence a reel, and a reel will make three dozen shirts. . . . How do I manage to live ?" (with a pained smile). " Well, I don't know : Mrs. — is very kind, she gives me a little help now and then, and other friends. I hope one of them " (pointing to the bed where her children lie asleep) " will soon be able to help me. I am a widow. . . . Well, he's gone, and I mustn't say anything against him, but if he hadn't died, *I* should have. . . .

" Going to have our wages raised all round ? well, that'll be a good job. Oh ! thank you, ma'am ; and God bless you. We'll all have a burst to-morrow. . . .



Drink! Heaven forbid! I've seen too much of that in the good man. I never drink anything stronger than that" (pointing to the teapot), "and that's not often strong either. . . . Yes, ma'am, I shall go to bed when I've finished this. Good-night! and bless you again."

\* \* \* \* \*

This is a picture from life. For another, equally faithful, which represents the lives and condition of thousands of our fellow-creatures in this prosperous land, we must travel a couple of hundred miles and make an excursion into the slums of Liverpool, one of the wealthiest seaports in the world. We shall have to traverse streets of which the squalor is not redeemed by their having ironically helped to perpetuate the fame of some of the world's poets, such as Homer and Virgil, after whom they are named. They consist largely of miserable tumble-down houses and of wretched courts and alleys, and whenever we come to a locality where two streets cross, we find at each corner a flaring gin-palace, painted in gorgeous colours, usually lighted outside

by gas jets inside of a parti-coloured glass barrel. Everything is done there to please the eye and attract custom.

And now as formerly, "two doors at right angles swing open below," where "the children of misery daily creep in." Around this "upas tree" may be seen groups of the "unemployed," men and women, whilst scores of barefooted and ragged children play about on the pavement. Indeed, a child with shoes and stockings is the exception in this poetical region.

When we have sufficiently studied the aspects of modern life which are to be met with within a mile of the offices of wealthy traders, we will visit one of the dwellings. We go, not up but down the steps of one of them and enter a cellar dwelling, of which there are still vast numbers to be found in some of our large towns, notwithstanding the reforming activity of the local authorities. Here we find ourselves once more in the midst of "social wreckage." On entering the cellar one is repelled by the foul atmosphere, nor is this to be wondered at when the contents are considered. The cellar is

about ten feet by fourteen in dimensions, and is lighted by a small window looking on to the area. Against that stands a sewing machine with some unfinished work, in this instance a coarse holland apron. In the middle of the room, or rather against one of the walls, is a table looking more like an old empty case than an article of furniture, and reaching nearly halfway across the cellar floor. Besides this there is a couple of chairs, and against the wall on the far side of the hearth is a dilapidated bedstead with poor disarranged coverings. The foot of the bed almost touches the table, so that there is hardly room to move about. A few tiny pictures in discoloured frames serve as ornaments over the mantelpiece. A small recess in the wall appears to be used as a dressing-room, and on the far side of the cellar is a doorway leading to the yard.

In this single apartment there lives (if it can be called living) a family of five: the father, who, however, sleeps at the house of a married daughter, the house-mother and a son about 17 years of age and two small children aged 7 and 9 respectively. The

father is seated on one of the chairs, and the mother stands up and greets us on entering. The former is a poverty-stricken labouring man who, we are told, is unable to earn anything, as one of his arms is helpless. He hardly utters a word during our visit. The mother is a cheerful voluble Irishwoman, scantily clothed and speaking with a pronounced brogue. Without the brogue and with the verbiage slightly altered, she shall tell her own story:

“ Well, you see, I make petticoats, generally for the neighbours, and I charge them sixpence each, and I do their repairs for 2d. These I am making for a friend of mine who has more work than she can do. She works for the shops, and allows me fivepence apiece, the same as they pay her, but I make mostly for the neighbours . . . Well, just now I have almost to keep the family. He (pointing to her husband) “ was took ill and is not fit for work yet, and our boy works in a sugar mill, and when he is working he gets ten shillings a week but trade’s bad and he’s doing nothing. . . . Yes, I have to pay for my own needles and thread.”

No wonder the cellar is dirty, evil-smelling and void of all the comforts and most of the necessities of life ! Every horse in its stable, every cow in its shippon, every living creature that is attached to mankind is better housed, better fed, and better cared for than these poor sweated cellar-workers, and, making every allowance for a half-told tale it is a marvel how they manage to exist at all. And let it be repeated, these poor women are living not amongst heathen savages, but in our Christian land, in the heart of our opulent cities, within a short distance of palatial public buildings and private places of business erected for the convenience of men who count their annual income by thousands of pounds, and who often spend as much upon a bottle of fine wine as would maintain such a family a whole week.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now let us pay a short visit to the home of the woman whose surplus work is let out to our poor cellar-dweller, and we shall there find a decided improvement in every respect. She occupies a flat of two apartments in one of the Corporation cottages erected for the

convenience of the dwellers in tenements that have been demolished as uninhabitable. The sitting-room in which she works is tidy and possesses a few of the comforts and decencies of the life of the poor. At a table of fair proportions sits a girl at her midday meal, who works in a tobacco factory (about such girls we shall have to speak hereafter). Her earnings, along with those of her mother, suffice to maintain a small family. If you inquire about her husband you will hear that he goes to sea in a short-voyage steamer, but you will learn little as regards his contribution towards his family's maintenance. Let us hope it is all right, but—the mother makes shirts for the shops at fivepence each ! and probably in the sweating market that is considered liberal pay !

## CHAPTER III.

### A FEW WORDS ON THE OTHER SIDE.

IN the preceding chapter our readers will have noticed the expression, "making every allowance for a half-told tale," and before proceeding to speak of other industries than those already referred to, we feel bound to say a few words savouring of caution and non-committal; for it is always best to face all sides of a problem which is exercising the consciences of thoughtful men and women in our day. First, then, the statements of the poor are not always to be relied upon. Even the police, when they are called upon to investigate cases in the interests of charity, are apt to be misled, much more so are charitably inclined laymen and ministers of religion. Poor law officers are not so easily deceived; their habitual caution and scepticism has rather a tendency to inculcate an attitude of distrust and severity. In fact, something of

that spirit and long experience are needed to cope with the difficulty.

Then, persons who seek an excuse for evading their responsibilities will plead the drunkenness of the lowest class as their justification. It is indeed quite true that a considerable part of the family earnings is often carried to the gin-palace, and not infrequently by some member of it who does nothing towards its maintenance. In this and similar cases the wretched wife has often to bear the whole burden alone, or with the help of young children. It may be that when they were married the husband was an industrious workman, but through sickness or slackness of business he may be temporarily thrown out of work. Then, finding that his wife can earn sufficient to maintain the family, it may be by working hard day and night, he becomes callous, and, joining the ranks of the unemployed in more senses than one—for he is generally the most demonstrative in their processions to proclaim “the right to work”—he eventually finds his way into gaol. Of course, these remarks do not apply to the vast body of



honest casual labourers, whose condition and relief is becoming every day more and more a matter of national concern.

And now we are constrained to add a few words on a phase of the subject which seems to be ignored everywhere: before select committees of the Commons, at public meetings, and in reports concerning "sweating"; we mean the enforced immoral practices resulting from insufficient earnings. Why is this? Is it a disinclination to meddle with an unsavoury subject? Are we of the foolish ones who rush in where angels fear to tread? Or is it that the promoters of the anti-sweating movement have such a poor opinion of society as to believe that an exposure of that kind would deter well-meaning persons from extending their support? Surely not. Although it may not obtrude itself upon public notice, it is the direct aspect of the matter, for it is destructive of the souls, as well as the bodies, of its victims. There are very many young women and girls who resort to prostitution as a means of supplementing their insufficient earnings, and there are always plenty of

men and women who are ready to encourage them and to profit by their shame. This fact was once impressed in a marked manner upon the author, and we are sure that in their heart of hearts many friends of the sweated could cite similar instances. Some years since there was a strike of girls in a ——— manufactory. They were earning from 5s. to 7s. 6d. a week, and the author saw them marching through the streets, and thought how helpless they were, and how hopeless their revolt against what was not then generally known as sweating. He joined with some friends of the working classes in seeking to raise their wages, and during a conference happened to mention the above fact, when he was assured that the strike could be indefinitely prolonged, for the strikers were not dependent for their livelihood on their legitimate earnings, but that many supplemented them by immoral courses, &c. This he found on inquiry to be absolutely correct. The threat of exposure secured for the workers a small increase of wages.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hints of this kind appear to have been thrown out by more than one of the witnesses before the Select Committee.

But in common with what occurred in this case, it is right to refer to a fact of a very different kind, which reflects discredit not upon the workers, but on their employers. Something will be said hereafter concerning the inability of ill-paid workers to combine, but it should be known that there are employers who mercilessly dismiss any of their "hands" whom they suspect to belong to an incipient union, no matter how long and faithfully they may have served them; that this is a common practice with men is, of course, well known; but too much stress cannot be laid on the necessity for its exposure in the case of sweated women.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE REVELATIONS OF THE "HOME WORK" COMMITTEE.

MUCH preparatory work has been done recently in the shape of agitation and collecting data for legislation against "sweating." A conference at the Guildhall, followed up by an imposing demonstration in the Queen's Hall, Langham Place, last January, set on foot and in motion the "National Anti-Sweating League."<sup>1</sup> The second of those meetings was presided over by the Rt. Rev. Charles Gore, D.D., Bishop of Birmingham, who pleaded the cause of the "sweated" eloquently, and was well supported by Mr. Henderson, Labour M.P. (to whose Bill on the subject lately before the House reference will be made presently), the Rev. Father Vaughan, S.J., Miss Mary MacArthur, President of the National Federation of

<sup>1</sup> Offices, 133, Salisbury Square, London, E.C. Secretary, Mr. J. Mallon.

Women Workers, Mr. Gardiner, Editor of the *Daily News* (who promoted the Sweated Industries Exhibition), and other able advocates. Under the auspices of the League some publications of more or less importance have already been issued, and in addition to those the matter has been searchingly canvassed in the reports of several working women's societies notably in the Report of the Women's Trade Union League (Miss Mary MacArthur, Secretary), the *Labour Gazette* of the Board of Trade, and, as it relates to Scotland, in the Annual Report of the Council for Women's Trades in Glasgow, ably edited by the Secretary, Miss Margaret Irwin.<sup>1</sup> But by far the most important move was the appointment by the House of Commons of a Select Committee "to consider and report upon the condition of labour in trades in which home work is prevalent,

<sup>1</sup> Although we have only mentioned two names above, it would be unfair not to refer to others whose indefatigable exertions are helping on the cause, as, for example, Miss Elisabeth Squire, Miss Clara Collet, Miss Mabel Vines, Miss Gertrude Tuckwell, Miss Clementina Black, the Misses Coppock, Looker, Safford, and Lewes, all of whom gave evidence before the Select Committee, besides many gentlemen too numerous to particularise.

and the proposals, including those for the establishment of Wages Boards and the licensing of work places, which have been made for the remedying of existing abuses." It is to the operations of this Committee that we now desire to draw the earnest attention of our readers.

It was appointed in June, 1907, and presented its Report, which was ordered to be printed and published, in July, 1908. Nothing could have been more satisfactory than the constitution of this Committee, which consisted of twenty-one members selected from all political parties, Conservative, Liberal, Nationalist and Labour, embracing members of every social rank, and presided over by Sir Thomas Whittaker, well known as one of the most ardent social reformers of our day. They are all more or less conversant with the conditions of labour in this country, and the witnesses who were summoned to give evidence were men and women possessing the widest knowledge and experience of the question itself — "Sweating." They were employers of labour, officials connected with the Sanitary and Labour Departments of the

State, Heads and Secretaries of Trades Unions, and of Women's Organizations of Labour—indeed all such as could speak from personal knowledge and experience at home as well as in some of the Colonies and the United States.

With reference to the proposed objects of the Committee, they had before them two Bills which have been introduced into the House of Commons, namely Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's "Home Work Regulation Bill," and the "Sweated Industries Bill" of Mr. Arthur Henderson. The object of the former is mainly to compel the licensing of homes where work is carried on, and the second for the establishment of Wages Boards. These Bills will be referred to hereafter. Before, however, speaking of the facts which were revealed by the evidence submitted to the Committee, it will be as well to give in their own words the definition of the term "sweating."

"If," they say, "the term 'sweating' is understood to mean that the employer grinds the faces of the poor by making an altogether inadequate payment for work upon

which he obtains a large and disproportionate profit, your Committee are of opinion that, although there are cases of this kind, sweating of this description is not the most important factor in the problem they have to consider. On the other hand, if "sweating" is understood to mean that work is paid for at a rate which, in the conditions under which many of the workers do it, yields to them an income which is quite insufficient to enable an adult person to obtain anything like proper food, clothing, and house-accommodation, there is no doubt that sweating does prevail extensively."

With every deference to the Committee, and without any desire to be hypercritical, we venture to say that we do not think the first part of this definition would meet with general acceptance from persons who live in industrial centres where there is no controlling influence by Trades Unions, nor does it appear to be strictly in accord with the evidence in the Report.

Time after time the Committee were assured that employers who are *believed to be* well-intentioned stated that they would gladly



raise the wages of the working women if it were not for the determined attitude of sweating firms with whom they competed. It is, however, an old story; and with this reservation we shall now proceed to cull from this interesting Report,<sup>1</sup> which occupies in all 555 pages, a few facts bearing upon our subject, and we shall endeavour to present them in a concise form convenient for the general reader.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

In the parish of Stepney an inquest was held upon a child which was declared by the jury to have died of starvation; in fact, it was shown that the whole family were on the brink of starvation. The case became so notorious that the Home Office deemed it necessary to make a special investigation, and they sent Miss ——, a lady inspector, to make the needful inquiries, and these are a few edifying facts of the case:—

That lady first visited the home of the family where all had recently been on the brink of starvation, and found it to consist

<sup>1</sup> Two blue books, &c., in all 500 and xlix. pp., 5s. 0½d., all booksellers.

of the sweated workwoman Mrs. H., her "ailing" husband who was unemployed, a daughter who was earning something as a washer in a laundry, and two grandchildren. She said she was 52 years of age, had been an outworker for 11 years, was a trousers finisher, and her pay for finishing trousers was  $2\frac{1}{2}d.$  (twopence-halfpenny) a pair. For that she had to put in the pockets and linings, sew on 11 buttons, make 5 button holes, soap and press the seams and "fell" the ends of the legs. She had to find her own trimmings, thread, cotton, gimp, also soap and the heat for her irons. It took her two hours to finish a pair of trousers. The inspector then visited the "middle-woman" from whom Mrs. H. obtained her work. "Mrs. E." said she was a widow and earned her livelihood by making trousers for a factory, and that she sub-let the work to eleven outdoor workers (that is, to women who, like Mrs. H., work in their own homes) and one indoor worker. She gets six shillings a dozen—or  $6d.$  a pair for making the trousers out of which she pays  $2\frac{1}{4}d.$  for machining,  $2\frac{1}{2}d.$  for finishing, and, after

reckoning what she pays the girl for pressing she has 10*d.* a dozen left for fire for pressing, her own time, and profit.

Prosecuting her inquiries further, the lady inspector found that the completed trousers, including, of course, the materials, were sold at the factory to retailers at 2*s.* 6*d.* a pair and resold by them to the public at about 2*s.* 11*d.*

In the course of her investigation, Miss V. (the inspector) was assured that "women who were starving were obliged to take what they could get, and one woman said that some contractors paid as low as 1½*d.* to 1¾*d.* per pair." Now, if any of our working men readers should in future invest in a pair of two-and-elevenpenny trousers, he will be able to calculate to a nicety how the cost has been distributed between the retailer, the wholesale manufacturer, the middle-woman contractor and the sweated home workers. The calculation will no doubt be interesting and edifying.

But we will not yet dismiss our lady inspector, whose evidence shows her to have been very kind and sympathetic. She was

one of H.M. Factory Inspectors, but had visited several of the outworkers in other trades than that above mentioned, and she told the Committee that she found much of the work carried on in basement kitchens (we have visited one of those together, reader), and in rooms some of them also in the basement, with a view to inquire into their sanitary condition. Such rooms were used as work- as well as living- and sleeping-rooms, and, she says, the insanitary conditions were nearly all domestic. She often found clothing lying on the beds, and the mattress, sheets, and counterpane would be filthy, while the floors of the rooms would be "very dirty indeed." One afternoon she went into a room where a woman was machining children's costumes, and there were three dirty children playing on the floor with the reels of silk and cotton that the mother was going to machine costumes with. At another time she went into a small room in a tenement house where waistcoat-making was being done, and on the bed lay the waistcoats; one of the children was sitting on the floor, a waistcoat was hanging over the edge of

the bed, and the child was leaning back with its head against the waistcoat. In the last case something is left to the imagination; but these must suffice as instances which might be multiplied indefinitely of sweating and the condition of workers in the tailoring trade. The curious reader may, however, find much valuable information of a like nature in the Report as it concerns factory labour, machinery, shirt and dress-making and various kinds of textile clothing for men and women, as well as reports of British consuls in Germany, Switzerland and Austria.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the saddest and most depressing chapters in this sordid story is that which relates to the making of cardboard boxes and match boxes.<sup>2</sup> The making of cardboard boxes is perhaps, after the clothing industry, the most extensive of home work, and it is carried on in Birmingham and elsewhere by one of the very poorest and lowest class of workers. It will be seen that the conditions

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> To the general reader the evidence connected with this branch of home work is somewhat confusing, but we have done our best to make it clear and consecutive.

under which the work is done make it necessarily the unhealthiest. In a small room such as has been already described, these boxes have to be made, pasted and dried. One of the witnesses<sup>1</sup> stated that the articles themselves, finished and unfinished, "overwhelm any small room." They are heaped on beds, table and floor; they restrict the breathing space and pollute the atmosphere, for after they are pasted they have all to be set out in order that they may dry. "Sometimes," we are told, "they blister, and then the poor worker has absolutely all her work in vain, for they are rejected as not up to the standard, and she receives no pay for them." And now as to the remuneration for this sickening work. "Small boxes for fountain pens, or larger ones for shoes or stationery, are paid for at the rate of ninepence to fifteen pence a gross, and out of that the worker has to find glue, paste, and string for tying up the parcels, at a cost of a penny or twopence per gross." We are ashamed to have to record such slavery in this Christian land! One witness tells of two sisters working

<sup>1</sup> Miss Squire, Government Inspector of Factories.

together who managed to make between them two gross a day, at a shilling a gross, from which there would be the usual deductions. This was when they were in full work, but one week they only earned 4s. 6d. between them. Those were "little boxes 6 by 6 for all sorts of haberdashery goods."

"Have you any idea," inquired the chairman, "how they managed to live? Of course, they could not live on 2s. 3d.?"

"No," answered the witness; "the husband of the younger woman was in work, and the older woman was getting parish relief"; and this statement she supplemented by saying that a large number of such workers are always in receipt of parish relief.

But the case of the matchbox makers, as it was elicited from the same trustworthy witness, is still more pitiable. Here it is in her own words:—

"As to the matchboxes, they are  $2\frac{1}{2}d.$  a gross" (meaning the price paid to the workers)—"that is, of course, 432 parts, because there is the slip lid that the box goes into, and the piece of sandpaper to put on the side; and then there is paste and

string. That costs about  $7\frac{3}{4}d.$  for every seven gross, and they are given out in quantities of seven gross. And the same boxes without the striking piece are  $2d.$  a gross . . . and there would be a farthing deduction from that. . . . They make their own paste over the fire; they buy their own flour and have to keep up a fire to make the paste. They have also to keep the room warm and dry for drying the boxes. They have to tie them up neatly in packets to take them back to the warehouse, and if any are blistered or imperfect they are not paid for those, and they are thrown aside." The last fact has already been stated, but it will bear repetition. Carrying on such work in a heated apartment, and at such a price, is indeed sweating in more senses than one.

\* \* \* \*

Somewhat akin to the making of cardboard boxes for various small articles is the "carding" industry of Birmingham, that is to say, the sewing of hooks and eyes and buttons on cards as they are sold in the shops. On this phase of sweating Mr. Graves, the Chief Inspector of Factories



in Birmingham, where the industry is chiefly carried on, bore some valuable testimony which may be interesting to our readers, more especially to ladies. As far as possible we will quote the witness's own description, which is very graphic:—

"There are," he said, "about six manufacturers who give out work to be done. They give it to women who come and carry it away in large quantities. Some of these women are what they call 'contractors.' They do very little of the carding themselves; they bring it round in a perambulator or wheelbarrow or anything they can get to carry it in, and they will give a certain amount to one cottage and a certain amount to another until they have delivered it over a certain district. The woman then collects this and brings it back to the factory carded." Concerning the women who actually do the carding work itself, the Inspector says that they are paid "from 8*d.* to 1*s.* 2*d.* a gross of cards, called a 'pack'"; and handing in one of the cards for the inspection of the Committee, he continues: "Those are the cards; for a gross of those

cards they are paid 8*d.* to 1*s.* 2*d.* for sewing on the hooks and eyes. The hook is first sewn on, and then the eye is linked to it, and then the eye is sewn on. They are paid according to size; there are lots of different sizes of hooks; the smaller they are the dearer the price, you see; the 1*s.* 2*d.* would be for the very little ones and the 8*d.* would be for the bigger sort. . . . Out of the 1*s.* 2*d.* or 8*d.* the woman has to find her needle and thread—I think about a half-penny a pack would pay for that—and as she does not bring the work from the factory herself she has to pay the contractor or collector a penny a pack for collection and delivery." That leaves the poor creature from 6½*d.* to 1*s.* 0½*d.* for filling up 144 cards. Then the Inspector goes on to say that a fairly competent worker will do a pack, *with the help of her children*, in about ten hours' pretty constant work. The children are 3, 4, and 5 years of age; they do the linking. "I have heaps of instances where different prices have been earned; the lowest, I find, was 2*s.* a week, and the highest 4*s.* 3*d.* The 4*s.* 3*d.* would be the

case of a woman with a number of children to keep."

He goes on to give precise details, in one case, of the number of hours worked, which amount during the whole week to 29½ hours. How do they make up their income? Well, one poor creature has a husband who "brought in something or other . . . he did very little work; he had worked sixteen hours a week for the last eleven weeks; work was very slack" (it always is when the wife slaves!) "and he was earning very little; however, she *had* a husband who did bring in *something*." Horrible, is it not, reader? but it represents thousands of similar cases.

A few words concerning the carding of buttons. "Buttons," the Inspector said, "are paid at from 2s. 6d. to 3s. per 100 gross of buttons"—2s. 6d. to 3s. for sewing on 14,400 buttons! "An expert worker would be able to earn 2s. to 3s. per week nett; a large number are working all the week for 2s. or 3s." Some of those workers "have support from the rates; some of them have perhaps older children

working in a factory." Naturally, the extreme poverty of these workers prevents them from keeping their homes clean and comfortable, whilst almost within a short distance from their wretched habitations are the places of business of persons who are probably heaping up fortunes with the fruits of their exhaustive labour.

\* \* \* \* \*

One phase of sweating which presents somewhat redeeming features is to be found in the lace-finishing trade of Nottingham. There the fresh air of the outer world takes the place of the fetid atmosphere of the crowded room or cellar—at least, in fair weather—and there, moreover, an attempt is being made by certain of the employers of labour to bring up the rate of wages a little above the standard of starvation. In connection with this industry the Committee had the advantage of hearing evidence from a lady inspector already quoted,<sup>1</sup> and also from Mr. Askwith, barrister-at-law, a gentleman well conversant with all labour questions, who frequently acts as arbitrator for

<sup>1</sup> Miss Squire.

the Board of Trade in labour disputes, in some of which sweating is very prevalent.

It appears that there are about 7,000 out-workers in the above trade in Nottingham, and as in the case of the cardboard box trade, the work is collected and distributed by "middle-women," who receive from 25 to 50 per cent. commission from the workers, on their pay. For this the middle-woman collects the work and takes it round to poor people, who, for various reasons, prefer remaining in their homes. The chief district where the work is done is Sneinton (Nottingham), "where one sees them sitting out in the yards and courts and streets in summer." "Indeed, it is hardly necessary to go into any house at Sneinton; one finds them sitting outside, unless it is very wet and cold, because they prefer fresh air, and they can sit out there chattering to one another and doing the lace quite comfortably."

So far, so good; but how about the sweating? The price paid per dozen yards for "clipping and scalloping" leaves them from 1*d.* to 2*d.* per hour (and up to 3*d.* and 4*d.* for those who take the better lace), and

working 10 hours that would make an average of 1s. 3d. a day. A great proportion of those who do this work are old and infirm people, "and children of a tender age, 5 or 6 years, are set to help their parents." Many of the workers are in receipt of parish relief. "It is a bad thing for workers, but it keeps them from utter destitution." The other conditions of life are but a repetition of what we have already seen. Husbands in casual employment, or lazy reprobates letting their wives slave for them.

And now a word concerning the "minimum wage" movement in this trade, which, it will be seen, affords, so far, but little relief to the sweated workers because of the aloofness of the class of employers to whom reference was made in our comments upon the definition of "sweating" in a previous chapter.

It appears that a considerable number of lace-makers of Nottingham have agreed upon a list of *minimum* wages paid by the firms whose names were appended to a circular published in the *Nottingham Guardian* on April 16, 1907. They are, however,

careful to state that many of them pay a higher scale than the minimum. The misfortune is that not only is the list only partial, but the prices named are paid, not to the worker, but to the middle-woman, who "naturally does not tell the out-worker from which firm she is receiving the work, so that there is no check possible on the out-workers' behalf as to whether the middle-woman is making a large or small profit."<sup>1</sup>

This fixing of a minimum wage is the crux of the whole problem of "sweating," and we shall hear presently how the Select Committee propose to deal with it, and with the secondary question of the middle-woman, or sub-contractor. And now, if the reader be as weary of hearing about the slavery and destitution of our poor out-workers as we are of narrating their sufferings, he will thank us for passing on to the suggested remedies.

<sup>1</sup> The Nottingham Wages Combination was the result of the appointment of the Select Committee.

## CHAPTER V.

### PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE REMEDIES FOR SWEATING.

ALTHOUGH the preceding examples of sweating in the tailoring, box-making, carding and lace-finishing trades may be taken as fairly illustrating the system, it is desirable that a few words should be added for the reader's guidance concerning the general scope of the Select Committee's Report. In addition to the trades referred to it deals with the following : " Boot-making, brush-making, corset-making, various branches of millinery, electro-plating, French-polishing, " fur - pulling," chain - making (Cradley Heath), boot and shoe making, and miscellaneous industries. It treats of the employment of children, factory labour, the habits and influence of Jewish workers, Sunday work, infectious diseases ; something about the legal and municipal aspects of the question, and information with regard to sweating



and its remedies in Australia and New Zealand.

It will be seen therefore that, although in such a Report there is necessarily much repetition and even surplusage,<sup>1</sup> and although many of the details are technical and uninteresting to the general reader, it cannot fail to be serviceable for future reference; and now we will proceed to speak of existing difficulties as they affect the proposed remedies, and of those remedies themselves. The chief obstacle which has long stood in the way of improving the condition of the women engaged in home-work is their inability, mainly through poverty, to combine for their own protection. That is incontestably proved by the fact that although their condition is in every respect the most wretched of the whole industrial population, they have practically no trades union; and this, of course, aggravates the natural disabilities of the sex. Another disadvantage is the increasing work in factories, and the substitution of steam for hand labour. A parallel case was the supplanting of work of

<sup>1</sup> 9,530 questions were asked and answered.

the hand loom in the cottage by the power loom of the factory, which led to much rioting and outrage in the past. The reader will doubtless be able to supply other examples from memory ; and although in the long run the substitution of machinery for manual labour is advantageous to the whole community, including the workers themselves, the adage holds good that "whilst the grass grows the horse starves." So far as it goes the remedy is a simple one. It has been shown that the women have not the power, unaided, to insist upon receiving a "living wage" ; but it may be urged that the men who are more fortunately circumstanced should help them. Well, to some extent they have done so, largely, no doubt, in a spirit of philanthropy, but also from interested motives ; for inasmuch as women's labour competes with their own, it is to their advantage that their (the women's) wages should be raised as high as possible. But neither the help of the men's trade unions nor the philanthropic efforts of men and women of the higher ranks of society have availed to prevent sweating ; it therefore behoves the State to interfere, and that

can best be done by the formation of women's unions under State sanction. This proposal is certain to meet with opposition either from interested employers or from old-fashioned obstructionists ; but as the Select Committee strongly advocate such a method of relieving the sweated workers, it will be as well to let them state in their own words their reasons for so doing :—

“ Upon the question of the general policy of Parliament fixing or providing for the fixing of a minimum rate of payment for work, below which it should be illegal to employ people, your Committee are of opinion that it is quite as legitimate to establish by legislation a minimum standard of remuneration as it is to establish such a standard of sanitation, cleanliness, ventilation, air space and hours of work. If it be said that there may be industries which cannot be carried on if such a standard of payment be enforced, it may be replied that this was said when the enactment of many of the provisions of the Factory and other similar Acts were proposed, and public opinion supported Parliament in deciding that if the prognostication were an accurate one, it would be better that any trade which could not exist if such a minimum of decent and humane conditions were insisted upon should cease. Parliament, with the full approval of the nation, has practically so decided again and again, when enactments

have been passed forbidding the carrying on of specified industries, unless certain minimum conditions as to health, safety, and comfort are complied with. It is doubtful whether there is any more important condition of individual and general well-being than the possibility of obtaining an income sufficient to enable those who earn it to secure, at any rate, the necessities of life. If a trade will not yield such an income to average industrious workers engaged in it, it is a parasite industry, and it is contrary to the general well-being that it should continue. Experience, however, teaches that the usual result of legislation of the nature referred to is not to kill the industry, but to reform it. Low-priced labour is a great obstacle to improvement. It discourages invention, and removes or prevents the growth of a great stimulus to progress and efficiency. The direct and early result of prohibiting unsatisfactory conditions in industrial life is almost invariably to direct the attention of the most competent minds in and about the trade to the production and introduction of such improvements in machinery, methods, and processes as will enable the industry to continue under greatly improved conditions, and be carried on with greater success than before. In our judgment there is no reason to doubt that similar beneficial results to all concerned—employers, workpeople, and the general public—to those which have followed the establishing of minimum conditions of other kinds in various departments of industrial life, would follow the establishing by law of

minimum rates of payment for such classes of workers as experience has shown are unable to secure for themselves rates of payment for work which may reasonably be regarded as even the lowest upon which an average worker can exist."

For these, as it appeared to the Committee, incontestable reasons, therefore, they recommend the formation of what are practically reformed trades unions for women in sweated industries. We call them "reformed" because they possess the combined advantages of employers and and workmen's unions as they exist separately at the present time; are supplemented by a system of arbitration which is little short of being compulsory, and offer a court of appeal in the Home Secretary himself. The reader will be able to test the accuracy of these views when he hears the substance of the "recommendations."

In addition to the oral evidence and written statements of expert witnesses, the Committee had before them the two Bills now before Parliament referred to in our fourth chapter. Of those Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's recommended a system of licensing the habitations of home-workers;

but it found no favour with the Select Committee on the grounds that it would "place obstacles in the way of an exceptionally poor and helpless section of the community earning a livelihood." Other reasons for its non-acceptance were the great additional trouble it would entail in its administration.

The other remedy, and the one which was embodied in the Bill, first introduced by Mr. Arthur Henderson,<sup>1</sup> the Labour member for Barnard Castle, and recently by Mr. Toulmin, member for Bury, met with the cordial approbation of the Committee. It favours the establishment of "Wages Boards" for fixing the minimum rate of wages to be paid in certain "sweated" industries, in this respect following the practice of all existing trades unions.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Proceeding now to consider the recommendations of the Committee for the relief of "sweated workers," it will be found that they divide the "home-workers" into three groups. First: "Single women, widows, wives deserted by or separated from their

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

husbands, and those whose husbands are ill or unable to work. Those are usually regular workers." Second: "Wives who obtain work when their husbands are out of employment. Those are more or less casual workers . . . and have to take such work as is available at the moment on such terms as are offered to them." And thirdly: "Wives and daughters of men in regular employment who wish to increase the family income."

For the benefit of all those classes of workers the Committee recommend the establishment of "Wages Boards" tentatively in the following trades, viz., "tailoring, shirt-making, underclothing and babylinen, and in the finishing processes of machine-made lace."<sup>1</sup> Those Boards should fix the minimum rate to be paid in their respective trades and (N.B.)—

"It should be an offence for any person to pay or offer to a home-worker a lower rate of payment for work than the minimum fixed by the Board for that particular work."

<sup>1</sup> The reader may notice that it was from these trades that we selected examples.

The enforcement of the Act and determinations of the Boards should be left to the factory inspectors and the Board itself, acting through the Home Secretary, who is to take the initiative and exercise control over the Boards. He is also to be empowered "after inquiry made," to establish Boards in other trades than those named.

The Boards themselves should be composed of representatives of both employers and employed home-workers in equal numbers, with a chairman chosen by the members, or, failing agreement, upon one then chosen by the Home Secretary.

(In connexion with this particular matter we would venture to add a suggestion based on long observation and experience. It is not stated whether the chairman must be a member of the Board, or whether he may be an outsider; but seeing that the representatives of the employers would be clever men of business, whilst those of the women (probably sweated workers) would have but little trade experience, it would seem imperative that the widest possible scope should be given in the selection of an unbiassed



chairman. Attention was drawn to this defect by a witness. Blue Book II. (Q. 4151 *et seq.*).

The Board is to take action when called upon to do so by any employer or seven workers, or by the whole of the representatives on the Board, or by either side, or by the chairman or Home Secretary, and the last-named should have the power of interference and indeed of suspending "for a specified time" any determination of the Board, "in case of the decisions of such a Board being likely to prove unreasonable and inadvisable in special cases." (The object of this clause seems to be to give aggrieved persons an opportunity to appeal against the decisions of a Board.) The rate fixed by the Board should apply to the whole district in which it is located. Whilst acknowledging the value, in many cases of middle-women as sub-contractors, the Committee recommends that the intermediate party should be in the "direct employ and pay of the employers."

This is a very imperfect outline of the character and functions of the proposed

“Wages Boards,” which in the Report occupy fourteen clauses, some of them long and argumentative. But it may be added that they recommend **Registration of Home-Workshops** with as little trouble as possible, and no expense to the workers; the compulsory production of the certificate of such registration by the employee to the employer, and provisions for the reform of dirty and ill-ventilated or over-crowded work-rooms, with powers of inspection under the *Public Health Act of 1875*.

The whole Report of the Committee indicates great ability and tact on the part of the members; it is exhaustive, statesmanlike, and beneficent in its recommendations, and we recommend it once more to the reader's careful perusal and study.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CONCLUSION.

OUR readers will have seen from the preceding pages that the sufferings of home-workers are due to various causes, the chief being starvation wages, and the consequent miserable social surroundings. First, a few words concerning the latter. The workers live in over-crowded rooms or cellars, where they work and sleep in a fetid atmosphere, and rear unhealthy offspring. They are tied to those places by domestic duties which prevent them from performing their work uninterruptedly. It is proposed to inspect such habitations with a view to improve their sanitary condition, but that is already attempted, apparently with little success. It seems desirable, therefore, that as far as possible the workers should be removed from their confined dwellings and enabled to carry on their industries in commodious work-rooms, and in a more whole-

some atmosphere, as is partially the case of the Nottingham lace-finishers.

This could only be effected by the erection of combined workshops and *crèches*, either by municipal authorities or private enterprise. In either case it would be advisable that such buildings should be purely working homes or shelters, for if an attempt were made to establish what are generally called "municipal workshops" where the finished work is sold, there would be an outcry against them from manufacturers, slop-dealers, and political opponents of Socialism, on the plea that they would interfere with legitimate trading. It is hardly necessary to point out the advantages that would accrue from this change. Largely relieved of their domestic anxieties, the women would work continuously in a purer atmosphere and generally under healthier conditions, and their children would be better cared for than in their wretched homes, or what is more likely in the street gutters. The middle-woman would be less needed, who at present absorbs so large a share of the sweated workers' earnings, for the latter would be

more easily accessible to the employer and *vice versa*. Registration would be simpler, and inspection far easier than if the inspectors were compelled to make periodical visits to the tenements or cellar-dwellings of the workwomen.

We earnestly commend these hints to the consideration of philanthropists, employers, and municipal authorities.

As to the proposed "Wages Boards," their establishment would be attended with far less obstacles than those which militated against the formation of the men's unions, and the expense to the State would be trifling, as it would merely necessitate Government supervision, and perhaps some little State aid. The matter may be safely left in the hands of legislators and experts who are alone able to deal with it successfully.

But before concluding, a word must be added on another "burning" question, namely, woman's suffrage, which was brought into great prominence in its relation to sweating by the recent complaints that women were excluded from the Commission

of Inquiry, although it was a question essentially interesting to their sex. There is no need here to distinguish between "Suffragists" and "Suffragettes," nor to discuss their respective methods of action, but we have only to look back on the recent history of labour—indeed, for that matter, on all English history—to see that an accession of political power invariably means higher pay and better conditions of existence. It has been so with men, and it would undoubtedly follow the enfranchisement of women. We fear, however, that the agitators for "votes for women" have not given due prominence to this phase of the subject, and that it will be left to the stronger sex to redress the grievances of the helpless work-women.

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And now a word in conclusion. We once heard the Abbé Moigno, an eminent French astronomer, deliver an address on the vast distances of the heavenly bodies, and this was his laconic but impressive peroration: "My friends, there is nothing so eloquent as figures." No, there is indeed nothing so

eloquent as trustworthy figures, and we find it so in our case. At the great anti-sweating demonstration referred to in a previous chapter one of the witnesses said: "There are in this country three and a half millions of wage-earning women if we exclude domestic servants. Thousands of those women work for wages ranging from half-a-crown to four shillings a week; the great majority of them do not earn all the year round an average of more than eight shillings a week.<sup>1</sup> The over-crowded and under-nourished woman is the greatest menace to the prosperity of the nation as a whole."

It is for those thousands of "sweated" women leading a life of poverty and wretchedness in the midst of wealth and luxury that we ask the help and sympathy of our readers, and we feel sure that we shall not ask them in vain. At the present time such help can be most effectively given by bringing pressure to bear upon individual Members of Parliament to support any measure of relief that may be considered efficient, more especially

<sup>1</sup> Miss MacArthur. Before the Select Committee she put it as low as seven shillings a week.

to Mr. Henderson's "Sweating Industries Bill" already referred to, or any Government measure to the same effect; indeed by making "anti-sweating" an election cry at every opportunity, so that legislation may not be permitted to slumber. They may also render efficient aid by giving their cordial support either pecuniarily or otherwise to those excellent men and women who are devoting all their time and thought and energy to the extermination of the "Sweating" Fiend.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Appendix B will be found a full abstract of Mr. Henderson's Bill.



## APPENDIX A.

### COMPARISON OF UNION AND NON-UNION RATES OF PAY FOR WOMEN'S WORK.

UNIONIST RATES FIXED BY THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL TRADE  
UNION OF BOOT AND SHOE OPERATIVES.

	Trade Union.	Non-Union.
Operator on a Silking Machine (Difference of	19s. (50 hours) 9d. and 3d. per gross)	7s. (52½—54).
Operator on Vamping Ma- chine . . . . .	4d. per hour	1d.—2½d. per hour.
Fitters on a set wage receive from, per week . . . .	15s. to 18s. and 20s.	9s. to 14s.
Machinists on a set wage receive from, per week .	16s. to 20s.	10s. to 15s. and 16s.
Silkers on a set wage receive from, per week . . . .	16s. to 19s.	7s. and 8s. to 13s.
Vampers on a set wage receive from, per week . . . .	16s. to 20s.	10s. to 15s.
Closers on a set wage receive from, per week . . . .	15s. to 18s.	7s. and 8s. to 12s.
Button Holers on a set wage receive from, per week .	16s. to 18s. and 19s.	8s. to 13s.

The above was handed to the Select Committee by Miss Gertrude Tuckwell, Chairman of the Women's Trade Union League.

## APPENDIX B.

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### *SWEATED INDUSTRIES.*

Abstract of a Bill to improve the Conditions of Employment, including the establishment of a legal minimum wage of persons employed in certain industries. Introduced by Mr. TOULMIN and Mr. A. HENDERSON, M.P.'s, &c. :—

1.—(1) Wages boards shall be established throughout the United Kingdom, for the trades specified in the schedule hereto, and shall act for such areas as the Secretary of State may determine.

(2) The Secretary of State may, if he thinks fit, on application being made and an inquiry being held as hereinafter provided, direct that a wages board shall be established for any other trade in any district.

(3) A wages board shall have power to make regulations fixing the minimum rate of wages to be paid to persons employed in their district in or about their trade.

2.—(1) Application for the establishment of a wages board for any trade in any district may be made to the Secretary of State by any trade union or trades council which represents persons employed in the trade in the district, or by any six persons who are

either employers of labour or employed in the trade in the district.

(2) On application being made as provided in this section, the Secretary of State shall cause an inquiry to be held into the desirability of appointing a wages board in accordance with the application, and the provisions of sections forty-five and forty-six of the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1887, shall apply to the inquiry with the necessary modifications.

3.—(1) A wages board shall consist of a chairman and such number of other members, not less than six and not more than ten, as the Secretary of State in each case may determine.

(2) One half of the number of members other than the chairman shall be representatives of employers and one half representatives of persons<sup>1</sup> employed in the trade in the district.

(3) The representatives of employers and of persons employed shall be chosen by employers and the persons employed respectively in such manner as the Secretary of State may on each occasion determine, or in default of such choice being made shall be nominated by the Secretary of State.

(4) The chairman shall be chosen by the other members within fourteen days from their appointment, or in default shall be nominated by the Secretary of State.

4.—(1) The term of office of a wages board shall be five years, or such shorter time not being less than two years as the Secretary of State may in any case at any time determine, and at the end of such term of office all the members of the board shall go out of office.

<sup>1</sup> This ought to be "actual workers."—Author.

(2) The chairman or any other member of a wages board may resign on giving to the board one month's previous notice in writing of his intention to do so.

(Then follow provisions for filling up casual vacancies on a Board.)

5.—(1) The minimum rate of wages fixed by a wages board may be calculated either by time or by piece-work, or so as to give an employer the option of paying either by time or by piece-work, except that in case of work given out from a factory or workshop or other place to be done elsewhere it shall be calculated by piece-work only.

(2) The minimum rate of wages may be fixed for any kind or kinds of work in a trade, and may be different for different kinds of work, and for different parts of the district, as the board think fit.

(3) The minimum rate of wages may be fixed for any class or classes of persons employed in a trade, and may be different for different classes of persons employed, as the board think fit.

6.—(1) Regulations made by a wages board fixing a minimum rate or rates of wages for a trade in their district shall state the date from which the minimum rate or rates of wages shall be established, and the minimum rate or rates of wages shall be established for that trade in that district as from that date, and shall continue established until they are cancelled by the wages board or their successors.

(Then follow rules regarding the publication of Regulations.)

7.—(1) Any determination of a wages board under this Act may be made by a majority of the members present.

(Then follow directions for the formation of a quorum.)

8.—(1) Where a minimum rate of wages is established in any district for any class of persons employed in any kind of work in any trade, any person carrying on business in the district who pays or offers wages, or on whose behalf wages are paid or offered, at a lower rate than the minimum, to any person of that class employed by him in that kind of work in that trade, shall be guilty of an offence against this Act.

(2) If wages are paid or offered by time where the minimum rate established is calculated by piece-work, or if wages are paid or offered by piece-work where the minimum rate established is calculated by time, the wages shall be deemed to be paid or offered at a lower rate than the minimum.

(3) Any person guilty of an offence against this Act shall be liable on summary conviction in case of a first conviction to a fine of not less than *one pound* or more than *five pounds* for each offence, and in case of a second or subsequent conviction within two years from the last conviction to a fine of not less than *two pounds* and not more than *twenty pounds* for each offence.

(4) When a person has been paid wages at a rate less than the minimum rate fixed under this Act, and applying to him, he shall be entitled to recover the deficiency.

9. It shall be the duty of inspectors appointed under the Factory and Workshop Act, 1901, to enforce the provisions of this Act within their districts, and for this purpose they shall have the same powers and

authorities as they have for the purpose of enforcing the provisions of that Act, *and all expenses incurred by them under this Act shall be deemed to be expenses incurred by them under that Act.*

10. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires—

The expression "trade" means any manufacture, process, trade, or business;

The expression "district" means any local area, whether county, borough, part of a county, or part of a borough, within the discretion of the Secretary of State.

11. This Act shall come into operation on the *first day of January one thousand nine hundred and nine.*

12. This Act may be cited as the Sweated Industries Act, 1908.

## SCHEDULE.

### TRADES TO WHICH THE ACT APPLIES IN THE FIRST INSTANCE.

Tailoring;

Dressmaking;

The making, altering, trimming, finishing, and repairing of shirts.

## APPENDIX C.



### HOME LABOUR ABROAD.

THE Report of the Select Committee on Home-Work contains a mass of valuable information concerning the prices paid and regulations concerning home-work in Berlin and in Germany generally, also in France, Switzerland, Austria and Hungary, as well as the minimum wages to be paid by the contractors to workpeople for making up the various descriptions of clothing required by the London County Council. (Similar regulations apply to other cities and towns.) Concerning the last named, which occupy nearly three closely-printed pages, it may be interesting to know that the highest number of hours of labour permitted is fifty-four and-a-half per week; also that wages must be paid without deductions for sewings, silk, twist, thread, &c.

\* \* \* \* \*

As regards *Berlin*, that city produces 90 per cent. of Germany's output in women's and children's clothes, three-fourths of the supply of boys' suits, and one-fourth of men's tailoring. In these and a number of other trades, such as shoemaking, altogether from 110,000 to 120,000 home-workers are employed. A large proportion of these are married men, whose wives assist them in their earnings. As regards

women, examples are given of the amounts earned by them during a month of the busy season, and they range from lowest, £1 14s. 6d., to highest, £4 15s. 3d. for the month, according to the skill of the workers.

It is estimated that the average earnings of women employed in making ladies' and children's mantles, of whom there are 27,000 home-workers, earn an average of £37 10s. a year. They appear to be fully employed for eight out of the twelve months. The figures in other trades are also given, and two things are very satisfactory: first, that the rates paid to home-workers on piece-work compare favourably with the wages of factory-workers; and, secondly, that whilst the earnings of home-workers in England are said to have fallen in recent years, the labour-prices in Germany have increased about 25 per cent. There are also middlemen in Berlin of whom the majority of home-workers prefer to make use; in the words of the Report, "he is by no means regarded as a sweater." In the women's and children's clothing trade a middleman employing eight or ten home-workers is said to make from £100 to £125 a year.

A large amount of valuable information is added concerning the home-workers of the whole of Germany (estimated at over 210,000) as regards the employment of children, laws respecting sickness, accident, old age, &c., the apartments in which the trades may be carried on, obligatory registration, minimum rate of wages fixed by suitable wages boards, &c.

\* \* \* \* \*

With respect to *France* the Report of a French Committee of the Chamber tells us:—"In France



home-work is free. . . . In its regulation France has allowed herself to be greatly out-distanced by foreign nations." No laws have been enacted in special reference to home-workers, and the general laws respecting the hours of labour only apply partially to home-workshops. (A glance at the condition of home-workers in France shows it to be much the same as in England.)

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Twelve of the *United States of America* have enacted excellent laws regulating what are known as "sweat shops." In those States the factory inspectors or the district police have access to apartments in which home-work is carried on for the purpose of seeing that the regulations regarding cleanliness, light, heat, ventilation, over-crowding, &c., are observed, and that the articles made are not exposed to infection or contagion and are free from vermin. Many details concerning those States are specified.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

In *Switzerland* the home industries seldom form the only source of income of the families employed. "Even when it is the principal source, the women, children, and old people of the household carry it on, while the men cultivate the land, with the help of the whole family in the fine season of the year."

Although home-labour in Switzerland is being largely superseded by factory-labour, it is still encouraged by manufacturers, but on careful consideration it would appear that this encouragement is given for the purpose of counteracting trades unionism or staving off legislation for the protection of labour. The best opinions on the subject recommend inquiry

and legislation, for it is women and children who are mostly employed in the home industries, and in their interests many of the grievances of the same class in England apply to the home-workers in Switzerland.

\* \* \* \* \*

There has been distinct legislation on the subject of home-work in *Austria and Hungary*. It is said to be of a very partial character, but it deals with the same abuses as prevail in this and other countries.



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